
L E T T E R

TO THE

RIGHT HON. WM. PITT, &c.

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L E T T E R

NO 14

RICHARD W. M. RILEY

A
L E T T E R

TO THE

RIGHT HON. WM. PITT,

ON THE

RESTRICTION

OF THE

REGENT'S AUTHORITY.

L O N D O N:

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Right Hon. Wm. Pitt,

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RESTRICTED

REGENT'S AUTHORITY.

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

AS you are a public character, I have a right to address you in a public manner. Clear, however, as that right may be, I should not have pleaded it at a less important conjuncture;—nor now that I have pleaded it, shall you complain that I have descended from the dignity of a gentleman.

The doctrines you will hear will not be agreeable, but they will be true. As such, you will not despise them. And herein consists the perfection of truth, that those who are interested to oppose, are compelled to respect it.

The object of this letter is not to deplore evil already done—it is not to upbraid past crimes, but to prevent future. Let the

ashes of guilt be given to the winds; but let not fresh victims be sacrificed.

You have decreed, that the prince of Wales shall be Regent—you have decreed, that his authority shall be limited—you have decreed, that he shall neither create peers, nor dispose of patent places—you have decreed, that the queen shall appoint to the household.

Such, Sir, are the restrictions. Let them be tried at their proper tribunal. That tribunal is the constitution—a tribunal, awful indeed, and of infinite jurisdiction—a tribunal, before which kings have appeared, and to which you are summoned.

The letter of the constitution gives the houses no right to appoint the executive power, in any case whatsoever. The spirit does in some; because, if the houses did not appoint, an estate would fail. But in the present, neither letter nor spirit authorize to *limit*; because there is no such *necessity* for limiting, as entitles the houses to assume legislation. Let us see, Sir, how far you have misled them.

The

The most peculiar feature in our frame of government, is the SOLIDITY of the executive power. The force of the state, collected into a mass, and bound by law, forms, in the hands of the sovereign, a power unknown to despotic governments. Though controuled, it is more robust than that of other monarchs. The kings of England have accomplished greater works without standing armies, than other sovereigns have atchieved by their assistance. They have had stouter enemies to fight, and they have fought them with more success. The parliaments of France are far less formidable than the legislative bodies in England. Yet the late king of France never met, nor dissolved them, unaided by the terrors of military power. The senate of Imperial Rome assembled under the naked sabres of the Prætorian guards. The king of England convokes and dissolves parliament with a nod.

One circumstance evinces the solidity of the executive power in the constitution of England. In other countries, when sub-

jects become formidable, they are dispatched by treachery—here, their credit is extinguished by the breath of the sovereign. James the second, of Scotland, was compelled to take off the earls of Douglas by assassination. Henry the third, of France, rid himself of the duke of Guise in the same manner. When the duke of Marlborough became dangerous, queen Anne dismissed him from his employments, and his consequence was no more.

How different are the examples of Hannibal and Cæsar :—The former, when recalled by the senate of Carthage, continued the war against the Romans ;—the latter, when summoned to resign his commission, marched to Rome and subdued it. Limited, must be firmer than absolute power. The first promotes the happiness of all, therefore all will preserve it ; the last promotes the misery of all, therefore all will destroy it.

In Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Scotland, Spain, and the kingdoms of Italy, the nobles have uniformly prevailed against the sovereign.

sovereign. What hindered them from effecting the same thing in England? The solidity of the executive power.

And the solidity of executive power, is the safety of the constitution. If that power had been divisible, private ambition would, long ere now, have annihilated the government. The examples of Pisistratus, Megacles, Marius, Sylla, with many other, entitle us to draw the conclusion. Similar events could never happen in this country. The executive power was solid and indivisible. Not an atom could escape to aggrandize a citizen. Revolutions in England, have accordingly proceeded from two causes; either from a positive *claim* to the crown, or from the power of the sovereign being *dissolved* by violation of the laws. No subject ever built upon the sole base of ambition. Even Cromwell levied war upon the king, in the royal name.

The solidity of the executive power, is also favourable to liberty. Impregably fortified, the crown has no motive of jealousy—no cause of alarm. It strives not to
stop

stop the streams of freedom, as in countries where it is less secure. Parliamentary debate, popular meetings, the liberty of the press, reign here uncontrouled.

Lastly; there can be no energy in government, when the executive power is divided. The nerves of the state should gather in one knot of prerogative. Unity gives decision; and decision, force to their operation.

If these doctrines could be sanctioned by a name, they might be stamped with high authority. But they can neither be confirmed, nor disputed. I assume then, as an undeniable position, that *the SOLIDITY of the executive power, is the nurse of freedom, the life of government, and the bulwark of the constitution.*

What will be the consequence of the restrictions?

The prince of Wales cannot create peers—the fountain of honour will be dried up. The queen appoints to the household—a new influence will be created. The queen will become *half* of the sovereign. Her power may be perverted to the worst ends. It may be employed to counteract the regent.

What

What will ensue? Domestic enmity, and a desperate struggle for dominion, between the crown, and the houses. If the crown was barely able to support that contest before, and that it was no more, we have *your* authority, what will it be now, when its antagonist will be strengthened with the aid of a new faction? It will be foiled at every turn. The balance of the constitution will be annihilated. The vitals of the executive power will be stabbed. There will be no stability, no security—all will be weakness, anarchy, and confusion.

If these evils be terrible in the tranquillity of peace, what will they be in the convulsion of war. Anarchy and discord at home, will produce shame and disaster abroad. One reflexion more—should the hour of rebellion, which heaven avert, return—should a second forty-five meet us—should we then be distracted in our councils.—I draw a veil over the consequence.

Is this the voice of faction? Are these evils exaggerated? Or are they the inevitable consequences following from the premises

mises you have established? If they be, and that they are, common sense cries aloud, where is the unity, the energy, the solidity of the executive power? Where is the palladium of our happiness? Vanished—gone—despair is left in its room.

And now, Sir, what apology will you make to your country, for having entailed on it such calamities? Will you say that the restrictions are intended to serve the king—that they are contrived to preserve his interest in the monarchy? You cannot pretend it;—the fact confutes you. Were this their object, they would be limited to some given period, which might determine, at least the probability of the sovereign's recovery. Are they intended to serve the people? No.—The people established the royal prerogative for their security. What then is their object? Your own breast will answer the question.

None will have the assurance to affirm that the Prince of Wales is to be distrusted. If he were, he would be as liable to be checked, as *any* Sovereign. But his conduct

duct has elevated him above suspicion. His filial piety has been exemplary—his patriotism eminent. Did he not renounce all right to the throne? Did he not disclaim all views of ambition? Did he not, and I call on you to answer, supplicate for mercy to his family, till you, Sir, dragged him into the senate, and forced him yourself to be ambitious?

And here let me observe, that those who shall support the restrictions, will stand pledged to the public, to bring forward a bill, for limiting the authority of every British sovereign, who mounts the throne at the age of twenty-seven years. The dilemma is inevitable. As the character of no prince can be freer from suspicion than that of his royal highness, the necessity for limiting must be permanent. Let me observe further, that those who shall oppose the restrictions, will be the champions of the people. The constitutional authority of the sovereign is *their* security, and whoever robs it, is *their* enemy.

When

When, in the name of God, will these restrictions cease? Parliament, you say, may remove them at pleasure. This is a dark oracle. Let it be interpreted. You endeavour, Sir, to preclude the possibility of parliament altering the restrictions. You create a patronage to influence the houses. Is it fair, by the restrictions themselves, to determine the question of their alteration? You first corrupt the judge, and then you invite us to the trial.

There is another account to settle. What will become of the patronage—the newly created power? The friends of the queen will wield it. It may be your task, Sir, to exercise it. Who will be responsible for that exercise. None. Sir, if patronage be dangerous in the disposal of a minister, as you told us in 1784, what will it be in irresponsible hands? But this will not be the whole influence you will possess. You have created many peers. And you now deny that power to the Prince of Wales, which you yourself abused through another. Sir, you invert the constitution. He
who

who will represent the king; and, according to its spirit, can do no wrong, will be held to account, while he who will represent a minister, will be irresponsible. You pinnion the executive power—you expand the wings of ambition.

Then, Sir, have you not violated the constitution—flagrantly violated in every article? Sir, I stand on impregnable ground. The executive power is, according to the British constitution, SOLID; INDIVISIBLE.—Solidity of power begets energy, peace, and freedom:—division of power, weakness, discord, and oppression. These truths are eternal. I defy all mankind to refute them.

And now, Sir, let me enquire, what right you have to sacrifice the happiness of millions, to your ambition. Liberty is the birthright of man. This is not the language of the populace, but it is the voice of God. And if it be, has not every Englishman a right to call you to a personal account, and to demand his share of the constitution?

Gracious Heaven, how long shall we be deceived! Are we doomed to be forever deluded? Has not every spring of duplicity

city been exerted—delay, misrepresentation, seduction? Has not every artifice been exhausted?

Sir, it is time to stop. Those who advise you to proceed, are your enemies. Ambition grows frantic. If you carry your present point, you will be detested; if you fail, you will be despised. That you will ultimately succeed, is impossible. The spirit of England will not see its prince insulted—it will swell, and overwhelm you.

F I N I S.